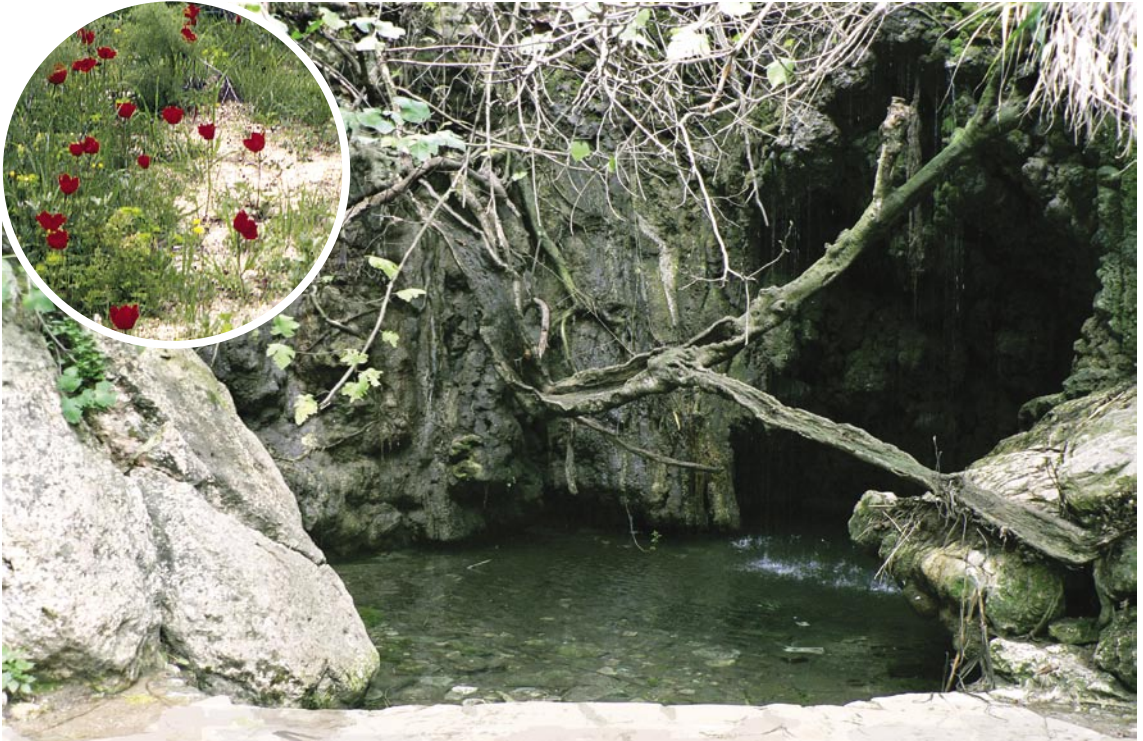


# CYPRUS SCENES

## The Baths of Aphrodite



Picture: Tony Benson

The Cyprus Tourist Board has certainly made the most of the Aphrodite connection (see the previous 'Cyprus scenes') and has provided for tourists the 'Aphrodite Cultural Route', linking various sites associated with the goddess. One of these sites, located at the extreme northwest of the island, is the so-called Baths of Aphrodite. This is a small pool fed by a trickling stream and set in the white limestone rock, surrounded by shrubs. It is a pleasant enough spot, though hardly warranting its billing as a tourist attraction, and is the starting point for two nature trails, the Aphrodite Trail and the Adonis Trail, which wind amongst hills, famed for their display of wild flowers in spring.

The names of these trails are derived from the legend that Aphrodite cavorted here with the young shepherd Adonis, later deified. As with much ancient mythology, stories about Adonis are confusing and sometimes conflicting, but of interest to us is that here we have another example of the import of Eastern deities to Europe via Cyprus. In both Greek and Phoenician mythology Adonis was slain by a wild boar, and the beautiful blood-red anemones (inset) that cover the slopes of the hills in Israel, Lebanon and Cyprus each spring are said to have sprung from his drops of blood.

The Phoenicians knew Adonis as Tammuz, and it was the practice of Phoenician women to have a festival of mourning for his death each spring, following which he would revive, a symbol of the coming of new life in the spring. Sadly, this practice spread to Jewish women, and Ezekiel records "women weeping for Tammuz" as one of the abominations practised in the temple itself (8:14). Another allusion to Israel worshipping Tammuz/Adonis is possibly found in Isaiah 17:10, where the planting of "pleasant plants" is translated "plantings of Adonis" in the RV margin, referring to the Phoenician practice of having gardens sacred to this deity.—*Tony Benson*